

**THE AMERICAN VETERAN
MARCH 2007 EDITION**

SEGMENT: JOHN BROWN

JIM BENSON, HOST: IMAGINE YOURSELF ON THE HIGH SEAS DURING WORLD WAR TWO, SAILING A LOADED MERCHANT MARINE SHIP TO ENGLAND. GERMAN U-BOATS HUNTING THE WATERS. THANKS TO A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS, YOU CAN PUT YOURSELF ON BOARD THE FULLY RENOVATED MERCHANT MARINE SHIP, THE JOHN BROWN. COKE ARIAIL TAKES US ON A CRUISE.

COKE ARIAIL, REPORTER: IN 1988, THE JOHN BROWN CAME BACK TO BALTIMORE, THE PLACE WHERE SHE WAS LAUNCHED IN 1942, BROUGHT HOME BY A GROUP OF PEOPLE DETERMINED TO PRESERVE HER.

JOE COLGAN, USN RETIRED – VICE CHAIRMAN, PROJECT LIBERTY: WELL, I HAD A NEIGHBOR. HE SAID, “YOU WERE ON LIBERTY SHIPS. THEY’RE GONNA TOW ONE INTO BALTIMORE.” THE NEXT THING YOU KNOW, I WAS DOWN HERE ALMOST ON A DAILY BASIS.

ARIAIL: TODAY LIBERTY SHIPS ARE A THING OF THE PAST. MOST HAVE MET THE WELDER’S CUTTING TORCH AND PASSED ON TO THEIR PLACE IN HISTORY. BUT HERE, ABOARD THE JOHN W. BROWN, THOSE WHO CARE AND REMEMBER, HAVE GIVEN OVER A MILLION VOLUNTEER HOURS TO KEEP HER POLISHED AND STEAMING INTO THE FUTURE – A LIVING MEMORIAL FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

GEORGE MAIER, USN RETIRED – CAPTAIN, PROJECT LIBERTY: I’VE ALWAYS ENJOYED SHIPS ALL MY LIFE. INSTEAD OF PLAYING GOLF, I STARTED TO PLAY SHIPS.

BENJAMIN LYONS, FIRST OFFICER, QUEEN MARY II – VOLUNTEER, PROJECT LIBERTY: WHENEVER I’M ON LEAVE FROM THE QUEEN MARY II, I SORT OF TRADE-IN THE CARPETS AND THE FINE DINING AND THE ROOM SERVICE TO COME DOWN AND WORK ON HERE WHENEVER I CAN.

ALAINA BASCIANO, CADET, US MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY – VOLUNTEER, PROJECT LIBERTY: I WAS NINE YEARS OLD WHEN I STARTED, AND I STARTED IN THE SHIP’S STORE. RIGHT NOW I GOT TO THE MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY IN KINGS POINT, NEW YORK.

DUFF PORTER, VOLUNTEER, PROJECT LIBERTY: MY DAD TOOK ME IN THE ENGINE ROOM OF A LIBERTY SHIP WHEN I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD AND I NEVER GOT OVER IT. SO, HERE I AM.

COLGAN: I CALL IT THE GROUP OF OVERQUALIFIED PEOPLE.

ARIAIL: OVERQUALIFIED OR NOT, THE GROUP FACED A MAJOR CHALLENGE.

MICHAEL SCHNEIDER, CAPTAIN, USN RETIRED – CHAIRMAN, PROJECT LIBERTY: WE HAD AN UNIMAGINABLE AMOUNT OF WORK TO DO TO RESTORE THE SHIP AND GET IT OPERATING, AND IT WAS A WONDERFUL CHALLENGE.

COLGAN: THE POOR GUYS IN THE ENGINE ROOM HAD AN UNBELIEVABLE JOB TO DO DOWN THERE TO GET THAT IN THE SHAPE THAT YOU SEE NOW.

ARIAIL: IT TOOK THREE YEARS OF LABOR BEFORE THE SHIP WAS FINALLY READY TO SAIL AGAIN.

CHARLES F. BLOCKSTON, VOLUNTEER, PROJECT LIBERTY: I SAW THAT ENGINE TURN I SAID, "OH BOY." IN FACT, I WAS DOWN BELOW WHEN WE LIT HER OFF THE FIRST TIME AND, AND, UH, WHEN IT BLEW THAT WHISTLE IT MADE MY TOES CURL.

MAIER: WE GOT THE SHIP OPERATIONAL, AND MADE A CRUISE ON HER, WHICH THEY CALLED "THE MATRON CRUISE" IN 1991. IT WAS NOT HER MAIDEN VOYAGE, IT WAS HER MATRON VOYAGE.

ARIAIL: NOT ONLY WAS THE SHIP MADE OPERATIONAL, IT WAS ALSO RESTORED TO HER AUTHENTIC WORLD WAR II CONDITION.

MAIER: WE TRIED TO REPLENISH EVERYTHING IT HAD ON BOARD DURING THE WAR, INCLUDING ALL THE GUNS.

COLGAN : EVERY GUN THAT YOU SEE ON THIS SHIP IS FUNCTIONAL. HERE'S A SPECIAL CARPENTER SHOP, HERE'S A SPECIAL ELECTRICAL SHOP AND HERE'S A SPECIAL PIPE SHOP. WE HAVE TO MAKE EVERYTHING. YOU CAN'T GO DOWN THE STREET AND BUY IT ANYMORE. THIS SHIP WAS BUILT, WHAT, 64 YEARS AGO? WHERE ARE YOU GONNA BUY THE PARTS?

MAIER: WE'RE TRYING TO TEACH PEOPLE, SHOW PEOPLE, AND MAKE THEM AWARE OF WHAT HAPPENED 50 YEARS AGO, 60 YEARS AGO, THAT THERE WERE A LOT OF SACRIFICES MADE, ON VERY PRIMITIVE CONDITIONS.

SCHNEIDER: OF ALL THE HISTORIC SHIP ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THOSE THAT OPERATE HISTORIC SHIPS LIKE WE DO, WE ARE THE ONLY ALL VOLUNTEER OPERATION. WE HAVE NOT PAID A SALARY, AND WE DON'T HAVE ANY SALARIED PEOPLE.

COLGAN: THEY DO IT BECAUSE THEY WANT TO DO IT. THEY WANT TO PRESERVE SOMETHING. THEY WANT SOMEBODY TO KNOW ABOUT THE MERCHANT MARINE.

LYONS: THIS SHIP IS SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST A MUSEUM SHIP THAT'S TIED UP TO THE PIER. YOU SEE THE SHIP IN OPERATION. YOU GO SEE THE ENGINE ROOM, AND YOU SEE THE CARGO GEAR TURNING OVER. IT'S JUST

TAKES YOU BACK TO A TOTALLY DIFFERENT ERA. THIS IS A VITAL PIECE OF HISTORY.

SCHNEIDER: COME DOWN AND LOOK AT IT. YOU SEE IT FIRSTHAND. IT'S BETTER THAN READING IT IN A, UH, IN A HISTORY BOOK OR LISTENING ABOUT IT IN A CLASSROOM. THIS IS WHERE IT'S VISIBLE AND YOU CAN PUT YOUR HANDS ON IT.

COLGAN: THIS IS THE GREATEST PIECE OF MILITARY HISTORY THAT WE COULD HAVE HERE IN THE CITY OF BALTIMORE. WE HAVE A FULLY OPERATIONAL WORLD WAR II CARGO-SLASH-TROOP SHIP.

BENSON: IF YOU'D LIKE TO TAKE A LIVING HISTORY CRUISE ON THE JOHN BROWN OR VOLUNTEER TO KEEP HER FIT, LOG ON TO WWW.LIBERTY-SHIP.COM.

END OF VIDEO